Diary of William Wing Sanderson (1869-1929)

August 12 to October 10, 1909

West Mountain (Hamilton County, District 10, Region 5), New York State

while serving as a

Forest Fire Observer for the New York State Forest, Fish and Game Commission

Transcribed by Capt. Paul T. Hartmann

Original Diary Archived & Notations by Alexandra Esty (Sanderson) Stocker

William Wing Sanderson (1870-1929)
Son of A. Legrand & Edna (Spencer) Sanderson
wedding portrait, 1897
, Morris, New York, USA
Archival Preservation by Alexandra Stocker

388
388
194
970
228
11.98

.80
.80
.40
11.98
.40
12.38
.60
12.98

12 in 1 ft
36 " 1 yd
198 " 1 rd
63360 " 1 mile

16½ ft or 5½ yds 1 rd
320 rds 1 mile

Mee

Mellen

5 ft 11 in to 1 mile

GOLD MEDAL WRITING TABLET

Sept 9. 4 fires 8-15 Phone connected at
1 " 2-5-0 2-3 on south Bay Rd station until Elevating
Hodges called up at station but could
not get connection anywhere

Ramey Ram

8-15

6 L
R L D. Conkey
Switch
Switch board not being
5 hr. could not call David Lake

Emm

Mr J P Jaaffe
Lee H R Stratton

Hon Geo A Davis
C & C Beeman

Mr

Marjorie Legrand
Mrs W W S

T R Doherty
H. J. Williams
Henry Wannamaker
Arthur Dalton
J. H. Lane Lyde N.Y. Wayne Co. Aug 31
Uncle Sandy

31 $6.00
30
6 6
6 7 11 11 11

3 | 7.5
2.5

Toilet Paper

1909 no 1

Aug 12 About Eleven o'clock we left Mr Paynes
for West Montana Harold Bird a boy about 16 years old lead the horse which
was loaded down with provision also my grip which I was
very anxious to take with me on account of having
my medicine and other necessary things which makes
it more home like wherever you are Dr Sheldon from New York
and another man and I think it was his sister came
along with us to see the great view from the summit
I had a pack basket on my back which was loaded with
provision eggs milk and other things which made it pretty heavy
about 50# I should judge our road leades through a forest
and our trail was the blades places on the trees also after about
one mile we struck the telephone line which was much easier
to follow we travel about 1½ miles before we came to the mountain
and had only got about 14 ft higher up than we were at home
we crossed some nice spring brooks on our way and
the last one we came to we filled our pails which was a good
mile from my camp I was informed that this was the only
place I could find water it took us about 2½ hours to come
the 3 miles when we got to the mountain it is very steep
and the higher up we got the more stops we made to rest and
also to give our hearts a chance to stop beating so hard well
when we got here we unloaded and the boy went back with
the horse and I sat down and ate my lunch and then started
to settle I unerated my little sheet iron stove and got that ready
I had set up my tent about a week before and one day while
was up here I put some screw hooks in the ridge pole so I could
hang some of the things up so I started in to hand things I was
bothered to know what I would do with my grip I did not want to
leave it on the ground so after looking around a few minutes
I decided to tip the crate that came around the stove and some
wire which had been left by the telephone men and made
a swing shelf and put my grip on it and then took some small pieces that
came off the crate and made places on the shelf for my tea coffee
and baking powder &c then I hung up a ham and a strip of bacon
also the lard tin can that the maples are kept in by that time
it was time for me to get supper so I started in for all that I
was worth I wanted to have some water for tea and the little stove
would only take in a stick about six in long and it kept me
busy and in about 1½ hours got my tea that was all I wanted
Mrs Payne had put me up so much lunch for dinner I had
all that I wanted I also had some milk which made me
feel better my stove has a oven in it I think that if they
had taken the oven off and made more room for the fire it

would have been better Mr Sheldon started back about 4 o'clock and I was expecting to spend the first night alone but while I was getting my supper three young men came up to see the sun set also to stay all night and see the sun rise so when I get through with my supper I went upon the ledges and invited them to come down and stay with me so they did I do not remember their names but they said that they were from New Jersey after dark I lit the lantern and we played cards until nine thirty and then rolled up in our blankets and went to sleep I did not sleep very good so I kept waking up every little while I heard something out side I suppose that it was a squirrel or hedge hog or something so I hope they boys up at a quater past four I expected that they were going to stay to breakfast but they would not It was cloudy and they could not see the sun rise and they were afraid that it was going to rain and so they started for their camp across the lake Hunter Pert well I got busy then and got my breakfast I had fryed bacon and eggs coffee and bread butter and cookie The was friday morning aug 13 so after breakfast I started down to the spring after water which took me twenty minutes to go down and about one hour to come back and I was wet through with sweat well after dinner I thought that I would see if I could not find water some where near by Mr Kupp said that there used to be a spring south of where I have got my camp so I started and gaged the trees so that I could find my way back and after a while I found a wet spot and dug down about two feet but did not find any water so I went a little farther and dug another hole and that was like the first one so I tryed another and I got water after digging a hole about two and one half feet in diameter and two feet deep I watched it a little while and I see that it was going to fill and I gave thank to him which giveth all things and then I started back to camp and tryed myself and see that it only took me five minutes that night I was all alone and I slept pretty good I forgot to tell that my bed is made of spruce & pine bough just the tips and I expect to add some grey blanket I never like my back I most always lay on my back and I like to have what I lay on feel smooth but I suppos that I will get used to it after a while The next morning which is Saturday I went to my well to get some water and I found it nearly full so after filling my pails I dipped all the water out again because it was filling after I started to fill my pails but you cannot imagin what a blessing it is to have water up here on this mountain so near by Well I celebrated most all day and cooked more stuff and boiled and fryed eggs and drank water as though it was free Well my business up here is to go to the sunsite where there is a tower about fourteen feet high and climb to the top and look to see if I see any smoke which would indicate a forest fire and to report to the

The warden what I see the phone is not completed yet so if I should see a fire I will have to travel through the forest about six miles to give notice It has been smoky or hazy for the last two day so I could not see very far I am supposed to have a field glass but I suppose the commissioners are getting out plans and specifications for them and that they will be here next year I was provided with a range finder a man by the name J Stevson brought it here and said that I was to have three station on the mountain one thousand feet a part to form a triangle so that I could use the range finder I also have a tripod with a board on it to use the range finder on but I only have one tower or station so do not have any use for it up there so I use it for a table and it is very handy to write and eat on as I do not have any boarders up here to make such thing, after telling me what I was going to have me went back to the station and the next morning he came back and also brought to fire warden and they fixed up the old station and told me to lay the maps on it and sight through the range finder and give them location by the no of degrees on the maps this that I have been tell you about the range finder happend a few days before I was ordered up here to the well Sunday I got up and got my breakfast and cleaned up and went down to Mr Haynes and got a good dinner we had string beans cucumbers and new potatoes ham bread butter huckel berry pie and I did eat well I got my washing and a loaf of bread eggs milk also left some money for Mr Payne to get me some tobacco I have to smoke if I want to take comfort so as to kep the small flyes and mosquitoes off I started for my camp at three fifty five and got here at five o'clock which is the quickest time I have made and it was a good thing that I did because it began to rain and it rained all night there is no fly to my tent and it came through and my stove was set up out doors and I got quite damp I set here with one of the blankets around me to keep dry and warm so I could read well I went to bed about ten o'clock and slept pretty good I did not want to get up it was still raining so I went out doors and brought the stove in and put it in the tent put the pipe and run a wire across to a couple of trees and then hoyled the pipe to it so I have been pretty comfortable all day it has rained all day and it is still raining this evening I took off my pants this afternoon and rolled a blanket around me and went to work preparing them I did not get them all done so will have to work on them tomorrow I went over to the well and it was running over and the water is all right now, I got my supper and after I had done my dishes I sat down by lantern light and wrote for a while and then read a story or two and went to bed I broke up Tuesday morning about day light and then slept until six I got up I found that my strip

of bacon fallen to the floor got up and looked at it and I see that
the sling had broken so I put a wire in it and hung it up again
It had stoped raining but the air was cold & also caught cold
my self I got my breakfast which consisted of fryed potatoes scrambled
eggs coffee and bread and butter also a cookie and I boiled some
eggs for my lunch at noon I did up the work and aired my blankets and
went after more wood I also made me a table to wash dishes &c
on I drove four crooked stick in the ground and laid some cross pieces on and
then filled it in with short poles it is not very tight but it is pretty handy
and I also went up on the cliff a couple of times to day and I looked up
arround the bottom of my tent I just heard a screech owl I am bothered
by the squirrels one camp and looked in the hole I cut in the side for my
stove pipe, last night It began to rain again about five o clock and it
also rained by spells this after noon when it rains there is a mist or
heave fog in the woods that seems to chill you through I have not seen
any body since Sunday I do not expect any body to come up until it drys up
some in the wood because if they did they would get wet though well I will
write some more to morrow if I am not sick my head is all stuffed up
I got up this morning Wednesday feeling pretty good it was
raining and has rained most of the hole to day I repaired my rest
and read some stories and done my house work and about
six twenty the telephone rung and I went over to see what was wanted
and the telephone man said that he had connected the line up
with the regular line for a few days until they got the switch board
then Mr Killon the man that runs the store call me up and
then Mr Lynn and about eight o clock Mr Johnson called me
up and told me that he was going to send a man up to stay with
me and also to do the work arround camp and bring up what
was wanted He thought that it must be lonely up here for one
man I am going down to camp in the morning after some provisions
Last night I heard a noise that sounded like a cat growling so
I stoped out side and fired a couple of times and that was the last
I heard from whatever it was I just had another call it is raining
hard again to night it seems mighty good to hear the phone once
more Thursday morning I got up about six o clock and got my
breakfast and done my house work and then started for Pinhill
camp on my way about one half mile from here met three men
coming up to see the view from the summit I did not like their
looks they did not look like the rest of the campers but I stoped
and talked with them for a while until I could look them over
good so that if I did not find things all right when I got back
I could describe them one was a tall raw boned sandy complexion
smooth face the next was not very tall with a red beard rowe pointed
and rather frail looking the other was not very tall but looked
younger than the rest and smooth face these last two has canvas
coats all carried a hunting knife in their belts and wore moccasins
there was not much in the tent that anybody would care much for
only some provisions and the blankets which look pretty good also my
suit case but when I got back I found things all right as far as I dare look

well I had a good dinner at Mr Paynes ham potatoes bread butter
peace, beans cucumber & huckleberry pie also milk and tea to drink
I got my mail and provisions and my tobacco They made a mistake
in getting my tobacco about ten cents in their favor the boy
got it I did not say anything because Mrs Payne is pretty good
she made the cook go out and get me all the green stuff for
my dinner because she thought that it would taste good to
me and it did I carried my pokes and books over for her to
read and she likes reading she is pretty miserable and I do
not expect that she will live long as she is pretty miserable
as I was getting through the bars Mr Platt hollowed to me he was
playing golf he wanted to know how I was getting along and also said
the thought that I was looking pretty good He told me that there had been
two drowned since was down a little girl about three years old
and a man about seventy years old I started for my camp about a quater
of four and got here at five which was doing pretty good I got
my supper and then started in to write It began to rain as soon as I
got back to camp This is Sunday It rained some this morning and
about eleven o'clock three boys came along and I invited them in
and after a few minutes I asked them if they were hungry
and they said that they were so I got them busy and I cut some
ham and we had some dinner and I thought by the way they
eat that they were hungry well after they left I filled the pogo so
as to have them for a day or two and went down to Mr Paynes
and got there just in time for supper This was my birthday trip
and the next day being Saturday and a fair over to the Catholic
church I went up that and see the boat raises with Mr Payne in
his motor boat and we had a nice time we got home about
seven o'clock or thereabouts the days are getting quite a little shorter
the next day being Sunday we sit around and I wrote five letters
and after dinner I went out for a ride with the paynes over
across the Lake and had a nice time the day I went to the fair
I went down to the station I got some segars and a box of candy
for Mrs Payne and she was as tickled as a child I was the only
one that thought of her well this monday morning I started for my
camp and there has been fifteen or twenty here this afternoon
all nice people I made some coffee for a man and his wife Mr Bennet
from New Britain came they were real nice and one party that was
upon the mountain asked if I wanted some of their provisions I said
yes and they brought me about six ears of sweet corn some potatoes
a pie and about 1/2 # of nice steak butter & bread I did not do a thing
to the meat & pie It was the first steak that I have seen in over
two weeks and it lay right close to my ribs and so did the corn
They all want to visit and ask questions Mr Bennet gave me
a picture of his baby and dog also showing the house well we
will see what another day will bring my pipe burned a hole
through the side and I cannot use it The mosquitoes are wild to
day also this evening Well this is Tuesday and I have

done my work and also inspected the forest and went down
to Mr Pepes got my dinner and also some oil and the
fly to mytent When I got up here I was wet through with
sweat I do not think that will carry another such load
not right off anyway it took me 45 minutes longer yet I got
my supper Fryed Ham Boiled potatoes Coffee Cookie & Pie I also
tryed receipt for griddle cakes and I think that I will try some
for the morning Mr Bame did not come I said some long words
I went down there on purpose for him than anything else
Wednesday morning I got up feeling pretty fair only a little sleepy
I sat up and read to long I got my breakfast Fried potatoes
and wheat pancakes I had pretty good luck and to night
I had limits and they meg fog The wind is blowing pretty
hard it has been smoky all day but have not seen any
fires I have kept a pretty good watch to day there were
two men up here just about 5 o'clock to see the view and
also to ask questions about 5-30 the phone rung and I
went to see what was the matter and Mr Bame was down at
the station and wanted to know why I was not down there
how is that for cheek and he also brought his son with him
I do not know what to do with him Han called me up and
wanted to know about them and I told him Han said that
I would have a man here to stay next week I expect to meet Han
to morrow at the Camp about noon and he will probly have something
to say about these people I told Mr Bame to take the boat and
go to Pine Hill Camp for to night & I would go down in the morning
if nothing happened well we will see how things look to morrow
morning (Thursday) it ~~was~~ rained hard until about 10 o'clock and then I piled
up my camp so if I did not get back everything would be all right Well
when I got down there Mr Bame was glad to see me and liked it very
much I thought that we had better stay until Friday morning and then
come back so we did we were about 2 hours coming up and he
seemed to stand it pretty good so I started in and got the fire
and he laid I was busy there was a big crowd coming up all told
there were 37 one of the party were Quakers and wanted me to
warm up his coffee pot and put in some water and when it was
ready I took it up to them The eldest man wanted to know how
much I told him anything he was a mind to give and came back
when they got ready to leave they came down to my camp and
left me 1 doz sandwiches ½ lemon pie 1 can sardines and three ten cent
cigars and while I was not looking the old gentlemen left 70¢ in
a pretin so I was pretty well pleased Mr Bame went up on the
summit four times which I thought was pretty good for a sick
man after a good three mile walk each I got all the meals while
he and his son were here the night morning being Saturday I got up
about a quater of five and so did Mr Bame and we went up on
the mountain to see the sunrise it was fine the fog in the
valleys looked like a lot of lakes when we got back I started the
breakfast and Mr Bame had a bleeding spell so I gave him

some Digot and salt but he spit up blood more or less all the rest of the time So Sunday afternoon I went down with them to Mr Haynes and this Monday morning Mr Payne talked with me and said that Mr Bourke with his sickness would have to go and that he was very sorry but it would stop others from coming there if they found it out He told them that they had better go up the lake about 1/2 mile and there was a good place to put up a tent and camp out and he would furnish them with what stuff they needed But Mr Bourke made up his mind to go home so they got an early dinner and Mr Haynes son took them in his motor boat to the station I waited until a quarter of three and then came up to my camp I was one hour and five minutes but it was to much for my chest but I guess I will be all right in the morning I cleaned up the best I could so as not to have anything that would cause any more sickness and went after water and then went up on the summit and took a look I saw a smoke over on the southwest corner of Big moose lake and some camp fires on the north side I reported it to Lloyd Lynn and he is phoning to McBride of Old Forge to find out and then will let me know Thursday morning I did not see anything of fire this morning well I have felt a little lonely this afternoon there was 90 to 10 up the afternoon from Mr Platts and Jonny Mr Platt brought up some mail for me also brought me 1 can Turkey 1 mince meat 1 Raisin cake 1 chocolate 1 Bob Bullion capsules so I had a great dinner to night I have not felt like doing much to day but I have been going most of the time I also got a postcard from Mr Lamb to Jones I will write him to night The wind is blowing hard I expect that it will rain before morning it has got cloudy and also dark very early to night This is wednesday it rained all night and all day I have felt lonely to day and I have taught I could and that is one thing that makes me feel so I got my meals regular I thinked most all night I think that I will go down to camp in the morning and stay a day or so. This is the first day of September I haven't any news to write this time. Thursday morning I went down to Mr Haynes and got there at 11-30 in the afternoon I saw Mr Platt and he asked me to come over to his house in the evening so I did and had a nice time also had some chocolate candy I stayed about 1 hour then came home Friday morning I had Mr Payne come up with me and helps put up the fly to my tent and after dinner Van Lynn came up for me to help spy a fire on 95 near Blue Mt. I will have to go up early and see if there are any signs of any in the morning I also have got some reports to fill out Saturday I went up on the signal tower but it was so smoky that I could not see very far so I came back and waited for Mr Lynn to call me up and by his being so late I did not get through with my breakfast until nine o'clock then I went after water also got up some wood and after dinner it began to rain so I have taken my bath and done out my washing and so I am starting to get my

supper some body down at the station fast called me up and wanted to know if it was going to rain I told him that it might after a while I may go down to Paynes in the morning Sunday morning it is raining hard so all I did was to get my meals and half past three it stoped for a short time so I started for Camp it began to rain again fast as I got to the top of the mountain well when I got there I found a letter Mr Lloyd and Monday morning Wm Payne came up with me to stay and help me and do such work that was necessary around camp we got some more boughs and put a railing around our bed so as to keep the boughs from getting scattered around the fire we made a camp stool out of some limbs and put a board on top it has been a very pleasant day and there were 10 or 12 up here to see the view Tuesday morning Wm went down to the station after some provisions and some more camp utencils I have just been up and taken a look but could not see any smoke I have done up the work and got up some wood it looks like rain again to day Wm did not come back until this Wednesday morning and brought up some provisions &c we moved the telephone over nearer camp it has been disconected at the Station since Monday There were a number up here to day This is Thursday there has been two fires one on South Bay Repute Lake and one on 75 5e about 12 miles from here ~~Thursday~~ Friday Wm went down to the station after some provisions and I have written some letters now I am trying to get my dinner the fire does not burn very good it is raining out side and if it keeps up I do not expect him back until to morrow ~~Saturday~~ Wm came back and brought me some mail also some receipts to sign and send back to the Commissioners so as to get some money It seems a queer way of doing business Sunday just about dinner time Mr Platt & Mr Anderson and their cook came up also a number of others It was a nice day Wm worked on some pens for a camp for Camage also on Monday there was not much news to day I called Van Lynn up and asked him about signing those receipts and he said that he would meet me at Paynes Tuesday noon so Tuesday we both went down Van was there and had also brought my mail over and was glad to get it so soon coming back up to camp we brought our guns and was pretty tired and did not feel very good for a long time I have been gaining I weighed without my coat 198# Wednesday we made a cupboard to put our things in also another bench to put papers & other things on It makes it seem more like home Thursday it was raining when we got up this morning and to day being the 5th of September we got our guns ready this afternoon Wm went down to camp I do not expect him back until to morrow I found a tree that I could get some birch bark off to take home with me Friday Wm came up and brought my mail also a letter from the commissioners one was for me to sign a receipt for the field glasses and one asking for an invoice of what belonged to the state and one that contained my bill for services from July 25 to Sept 1st

No 5

Saturday Sept 18 Mr Payne told me that he could not stay much longer and that his father was coming up to stay a while so he started back home and towards night Mr Payne came up I was glad to see him or any body It has been very lonely here for the last few days It is so clear & quiet Sunday Mr Payne got up just a daylight and went out to see if he could see a deer but did not find one our spring has just about given out so this afternoon we dug another lower down and we are in hopes that it will be better now we are getting our supper I found a queer shape root & tie a small one and brought it to camp I think that I can make a picture frame out of it Monday morning we went after water and found about 2 wash tubs full so we felt pretty good I started for the station about 9 o clock and got down to the camp about ten o clock cleaned up and changed my clothes and after dinner we started for the station in the launch and the engine did not work good so we were about three hours going, so when I got there I had to hustle I got my hair cut and sent my money home & got a few things and started back we got back to Mr Paynes about six o clock so I changed my clothes and started for the mountain it was getting dark so I took a lantern and had only got about ½ mile when I met Mr Payne coming down, so we went back, and stayed all night, and started back early Tuesday morning, we found every thing all right when we got here. Wednesday it was cloudy most all day and this evening it is thundering and it rained good all night Thursday Mr Payne went down after safeties and came back in the afternoon with the horse and was pretty tired Harold came up with him. Friday also got some mail a letter from Flossie & Ma & the children Friday we took a walk over the other side of the mountain and got some gum Saturday we did not do much only fuss around camp Mr Payne got some more boughs for the bed and we slept pretty good last night I went out doors last night about 10.30 and pretty near run onto a deer My how he did sport & blow This Sunday morning Mr Payne has gone down home expect that he will leave here Thursday and that I will have another man some time The pay is so small that it is hard to find any body to take the job Monday It rained some early this morning and has been cloudy all day Mr Payne got back this afternoon not very much to write about it started in to rain about eight o clock this evening and it rained steady all night and until about 9 this morning Tuesday about 12 the sun came out but I think it is going to rain some more It cleared off and the sun came out bright and about three we took our guns and went out to take a look but did not see anything This Wednesday morning it came in clear and bright but quite a haze so could not see off as far as common Mr Payne went down home I do not know wheather he will be back to day or not Mr Payne did not come back to night I did my regular work and fussed around camp

This is Thursday and it is still raining Mr Payne came back this afternoon and brought up some provision Van Lyne called up and wanted to know about our having a horse to bring things up last week and also thought that the former owner would not stand for it I was surprised that there should be a charge for it because Mr Payne said that he was going to have the horse bring up a load so that he would not have to bring for such himself Well Mr Payne was mad and would not stay over night and went right back so I am alone once more this is the last day of September so I only have one more month up here

Oct 1st Friday It has rained all day I wrote some letters and started in to clean gun Saturday finished cleaning gun and have got about 2# so I guess I will stop It is still raining and is very foggy Tomorrow am going down to camp and do not expect to come back before monday Sunday I went down to camp and got there about one o'clock and staid all night Monday Oct 4. Paul Staves came over to stay with me and we came back to the station got here about 12-30 and about 3-30 we went for a walk but did not see any game Tuesday we did not have much to do Wednesday Oct 6 we see a smoke and could not call any body up on the phone so sent Paul down to see discovered smoke #46 Paul left here 10-15. Thursday Paul came back he found that some limbs had fallen on the wires also that the smoke did not amount to anything I was very disappointed about not getting any mail so I have been very blue Friday the weather is nice but it is so still It does not seem as though I could stand it up here much longer Saturday It has been very pleasant Sunday it has been a very nice day The leaves are falling very fast and there has been quite a breeze and we may get some rain Paul went down this afternoon Oct 10th and I expect him back to morrow about noon

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Below is the list of names written on the back of the inside cover of the diary writing tablet:

Mr. J P Jaafe

Dr. D R Stratton

Hon Geo A Davis

C A Beeman

Ma [Edna Jane Spencer Sanderson (1837-1921), William's widowed mother]

Marjorie & Legrand [Marjorie Sanderson (1898-1989) & Albert Legrand Sanderson (1900-1988), William's children]

Mrs WWS [Mrs. William Wing Sanderson, aka Gertrude Cassandana Cruttenden Sanderson (1879-1972), William's wife]

F R Doherty

H.J. Williams

Henry Wannamaker

Arthur Dalton

J H Lane Clyde NY Wayne Co. Aug 31 [John H. Lane living in Clyde, Galen, Wayne NY in 1910 Census]

Uncle Leroy [A. Leroy Sanderson (1835-1910), William's paternal uncle]

1909 No 1

Aug 12 - About eleven o'clock we left Mr. Payne's for West Mountain. Harold Bird, a boy about 16 years old, lead the horse which was loaded down with provisions also my grip which I was very anxious to take with me on account of having my medicine and other necessary things which makes it more homelike where you are. Dr Sheldon from New York a young man and another man and I think it was his sister came along with us to see the great view from the summit. I had a pack basket on my back which was loaded with provision eggs, milk, and other things which made it pretty heavy about 50 # I should judge. Our road lead us through a forest and our guide was the glazes [*A 19th century New York term meaning blazes or other forms of marking*] places on the trees. Also, after about one mile, we struck the telephone line which was much easier to follow. We traveled 1 ½ miles before we came to the mountain and had only got about 14 ft. higher up than we were at house to 1800 ft above sea level.

We crossed some nice spring brooks on our way and the last one we came to we filled our pails which was a good mile from my camp. I was informed that this was the only place I could find water. It took us about 2 ½ hours to come the three miles. When we got to the mountain it was very steep and the higher up we got the more stops we made to rest and to give our hearts a chance to stop beating so hard. Well when we got here we unloaded and the boy went back with the horse and I sat down and ate my lunch and then started to settle. I uncrated my little sheet iron stove and got that ready. I had set up my tent about a week before and one day while I was up here I put some screw hooks in the ridge pole so I could hang some of the things up so I started in to hand things. I was bothered to know what I would do with my grip [short for gripsack, a US expression used to describe a traveler's handbag). I did not want to leave it on the ground so after looking around a few minutes I decided to take the crate that came around the stove and some wire which had been left by the telephone men and made a swing shelf and put my grip on it and then took some small pieces that came off of the crate and made places on the shelf for my tea, coffee and baking powder &c [etc] Then I hung up a ham and a strip of bacon also the lard tin can that the maps

are kept in. By that time it was time for me to get supper so I started in for all that I was worth. I wanted to heat some water for tea and the little stove would only take in a stick about six in. long and it kept me busy and in about 1 ½ hours I got my tea. That was all I wanted. Mrs. Payne put me up so much lunch for dinner I had all that I wanted. I also had some milk which made me feel better. My stove has an oven in it and I think that if they had left the oven off and made more room for the fire it would have been better. Mr. Sheldon stated back about 4 o'clock and I was expecting to spend the first night alone but while I was getting my supper three young men came up to see the sunset also to stay all night and see the sunrise so when I got through with my supper I went up on the ledges and invited them to come down and stay with me so they did. I do not remember their names but they said that they were from New Jersey. After dark I lit the lantern and we played cards until nine thirty and then rolled up in our blankets and went to sleep.

I did not sleep very good so I kept waking up every little while. I heard something out side. I suppose that it was a squirrel or hedge hog or something so I woke the boys up at a quarter past four. I expected that they were going to stay to breakfast but they would not. It was cloudy and they could not see the sunrise and they were afraid that it was going to rain and so they started for their camp across the lake Hunter Rest. Well I got busy then and got my breakfast. I had fried bacon and eggs, coffee and bread & butter also a cookie.

This was Friday morning Aug 13 so after breakfast I started down to the spring after water which took me twenty minutes to go down and about one hour to come back and I was wet through with sweat. Well after dinner I thought that I would see if I could not find water some where nearby. Mr. Payne said that there used to be a spring south of where I have got my camp so I started and glazed the trees so that I could find my way back and after a while I found a wet spot and dug down about two feet but did not find any water so I went a little farther and dug another hole and that was like the first one so I tried another and I got water after digging a hole about two and one half feet in diameter and two feet deep. I watched it a little while and I see that it was going to fill and I gave thanks to him which giveth all things and then I started back to camp and timed myself and see that it only took me five

minutes. That night I was all alone and I slept pretty good. I forgot to tell that my bed is made of spruce and pine boughs, just the tips, and I expect to add some every day or so. It never fits my back. I most always lay on my back and I like to have what I lay on feel smooth but I suppose that I will get used to it after a while. The next morning which is Saturday I went to my well to get some water and found it nearly full so after filling my pails I diped all of the water out again because it was riley [OED: Thick, turbid, muddy] after I started to fill my pails but cannot imagine what a blessing it is to have water up here on this mountain so near by. Well I celebrated most all day and cooked more stuff and boiled and fried eggs and drank water as though it was free.

Well my business up here is to go to the summit where there is a tower about fourteen feet high and climb to the top and look to see any smoke which would indicate a forest fire and to report to the

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fire warden what I see. The phone is not completed yet so if I should see a fire I will have to travel through the forest about six miles to give notice. It has been smoky or hazy for the last two days so I could not see very far. I am supposed to have field glass but I suppose the Commissioners are getting out plans and specifications for them and that they will be here next year. I was provided with a range finder a man by the name of Steveson brought it here and said that I was to have three station[s] on the mountain one thousand feet apart to form a triangle so that I could use the range finder. I also have a tripod with a board on it to use the range finder on but I only have one tower or station so do not have any use for it up there so I use it for a table and it is very handy to write and eat on as I do not have any boards up here to make such thing, after telling me what I was going to have he went back to the station and the next morning he came back and also brought to [the] fire warden and the[y] fixed up the old station and told me to lay the map on it and sight through the range finder and give them location by the no. of degrees on the map. This what I have been tell you about the range finder happened a few days before I was ordered up here to stay.

Well, Sunday I got up and got my breakfast and cleaned up and went down to Mr. Payne's and got a good dinner. We had string beans cucumbers and new potatoes ham bread & butter huckleberry pie and I did eat well. I got my washing and a loaf of bread eggs milk also left some money for Mr. Payne to get me some tobacco. I have to smoke if I want to take comfort so as to keep the small flies and mosquitoes off. I started to my camp at three forty- five and got here at five o'clock which is the quickest time I have made and it was a good thing I did because it began to rain and it rained all night. There is no fly to my tent and it came through and my stove was set up out doors and I got quite damp. I set here with one of the blankets around me to keep dry and warm so I could read. Well I went to bed about ten o'clock and slept pretty good. I did not want to get up. It was still raining so I went out doors and brought the stove in and cut a hole in the tent for the pipe and run a wire across to a couple of trees and then I wired the pipe to it so I have been pretty comfortable all day. It has rained all day and it is still raining this evening. I took off my pants this afternoon and rolled a blanket around me and went to work repairing them. I did not get them all done so will have to work on them tomorrow. Went over to the well and it was running over and the water is all right now. I got my supper and after had done my dishes. I sat down by lantern light and wrote for a while and then read a story or two and went to bed.

I woke up Tuesday morning about daylight and then slept until six & got up. I found that my strip of bacon fallen to the floor. I got up and looked at it and I see that the sling had broken so I put a wire in it and hung it up again. It has stopped raining but the air was cold and I also caught cold my self. I got my breakfast which consisted of fried potatoes scrambled eggs coffee and bread and butter also a cookie and I boiled some eggs for my lunch at noon. I did up the work and aired my blankets and went after more wood. I also made me a table to wash dishes &c [etc] on. I drove foure croched stick[s] in the ground and laid some cross pieces on and then filled it in with short poles. It is not very tight but it is pretty handy and I also went up on the cliff a couple of times today and I banked up around the bottom of my tent. I just heard a screech owl. I am bothered by the squirrels. One came and looked in the hole I cut in the side for my stove pipe. Last night it began to rain again about five o'clock and it also rained by spells this afternoon. When it rains here there is

a mist or heavy fog in the woods that seems to chill you through. I have not seen anybody since Sunday. I do not expect anybody to come up until it dries up some in the wood[s] because if they did they would get wet through. Well I will write some more tomorrow if I'm not sick. My head is all stuffed up.

I got up this morning, Wednesday feeling pretty good. It was raining and has rained most of the time today. I repaired my vest and I read some stories and done my house work and about six twenty the telephone rung and I went over to see what was wanted and the telephone man said that he and connected the line up with the regular line for a few days until they got the switch board. Then Mr. Dillon, the man that runs the store call me up and then Mr. Lynn [*Daniel Lynn, was the local Fire Patrolman and later Forest Ranger until 1935*] and about eight o'clock Mr. Johnson called me up and told me that he was going to send a man up to stay with me and also to do the work around camp and bring up what was wanted. He thought that it must be lonely up here for one man. I am going down to camp in the morning after some provisions. Last night I heard a noise that sounded like a cat growling so I stepped outside and fired a couple of times and that was the last I heard from whatever it was. I just had another call. It is raining hard again tonight. It seems mighty good to hear the telephone once more.

Thursday morning I got up about six o'clock and got my breakfast and done my house work and then started for Pine Hill Camp. On my way about one half mile from here I met three men coming up to see the view from the summit. I did not like their looks. They did not look like the rest of the campers but I stopped and talked with them for a while until I could look them over good so that if I did not find things all right when I got back I could describe them. One was a tall raw boned sandy complexion smooth face. The next was not very tall with a red beard wore pointed and rather frail looking. The other was not very tall but looked younger than the rest and smooth face. These last two had canvas coats. All carried a hunting knife in their belts and wore moccasins. There was not much in the tent that anybody would care much for, only some provisions and the blankets which look pretty good also my suit case but when I got back I found things all right as far as I have looked.

Well I had a good dinner at Mr. Payne's ham potatoes bread butter peas beans cucumber and huckleberry pie also milk and tea to drink. I got my mail and provisions and my tobacco. They made a mistake in getting my tobacco of about ten cents in their favor. The boy got it. I did not say anything because Mrs. Payne is pretty good. She made the cook go out and get me all the green stuff for me for my dinner because she thought that it would taste good to me and it did. I carried my papers and books over for her to read and she likes reading. She is pretty miserable and I do not expect that she will live long as she is pretty miserable. As I was getting through the bars[?] Mr. Platt hollered to me. He was playing gruff[?] he wanted to know how I was getting along and also said that he thought that I was looking pretty good. He told me that there had been two drowned since I was down a little girl about three years old and a man about seventy years old. I started for my camp about a quarter of four and got here at five which was doing pretty good. I got my supper and then started in to write. It began to rain as soon as I got back to camp.

This is Friday. It rained some this morning and about eleven o'clock three boys came along and I invited them in and after a few minutes I asked them if they were hungry and they said that they were so I got them bussy [busy] and I cut some ham and we had some dinner and I thought by the way they eat that they were hungry. Well, after they left I fixed things so as to have them for a day or two and went down to Mr. Payne's and got there just in time for supper. This was my birthday trip and the next day being Saturday and a fair over to the Catholic Church. I went to that and see the boat races with Wm [William] Payne in his motorboat and we had a nice time. We got home about seven o'clock or there abouts. The days are getting quite a little shorter. The next day being Sunday we set around and I wrote five letters and after dinner I went out for a ride with the Payne's over across the Lake and had a nice time. The day I went to the fair I went down to the station. I got some cigars and a box of candy for Mrs. Payne and she was a tickled as a child. I was the only one who thought of her.

Well, this Monday morning I started for my camp and there has been fifteen or twenty here this afternoon. All nice people. I made some coffee for a man and his wife & Mr. Bennet from New Britton Conn. [New Britain, CT]. They were real nice and one party that was up on the mountain asked if I wanted

some of their provisions. I said yes and they brought about six cans of sweet corn some potatoes a pie about ½# of nice steak butter & bread. I did not do a thing to the meat & pie. It was the first steak that I have seen in over two weeks and it lay right close to my ribs and so did the corn. They all want to visit and ask questions. Mr. Bennet gave me a picture of his baby and dog also showing the house. Well, we will see what another day will bring. My pipe burned a hole through the side and I am all upset. The mosquitoes are wild today also this evening.

Well, this is Tuesday and I have done my work and also inspected the forest and went down to Mr. Payne's got my dinner and also some oil and the fly to my tent. When I got up here I was wet through with sweat. I do not think that I will carry another such load not right off anyway. It took me 45 minutes longer. Well, I got my supper of fried ham boiled potatoes coffee cookie & pie. I also tried the receipt [*archaic, now superseded by recipe*] for griddle cakes and I think that I will try some in the morning. Mr. Barne did not come & I said some long words. I went down more on purpose for him than anything else.

Wednesday morning I got up feeling pretty fair only a little sleepy. I sat up and read too long. I got my breakfast, fried potatoes and wheat pancakes. I had pretty good luck and tonight I had omelets and they were good. The wind is blowing pretty hard. It has been smoky all day but have not seen any fires. I have kept pretty good watch today. There were two men up here just about 5 o'clock to see the view and also to ask questions. About 5-30 the phone rung and I went to see what was the matter and Mr. Barne down at the station and wanted to know why I was not down there. How is that for cheak [Sic., cheek; OED: impudence] and he also brought his son with him. I do not know what to do with him. Dan called me up and wanted to know about them and I told him Dan said that I would have a man here to stay next week. I expect to meet Dan tomorrow at the camp about noon and he will probably have something to say about these people. I told Mr. Barne to take the boat and go to Pine Hill Camp for the night& I would go down in the morning if nothing happened. Well we will see how things look tomorrow.

This morning, Thursday, it rained hard until about 10 o'clock and then I fixed up my camp so if I did not get back everything would be all right. Well when I

got down there, Mr. Barne was glad to see me and liked it very much. I thought that we had better stay until Friday morning and then come back. So we did.

We were about 2 hours coming up and he seemed to stand it pretty good. So I started in and got the dinner and while I was busy there was a big crowd come up. All tolled there were 37. One of the parties were Quakers and wanted me to warm up his coffee pot and put in some water and when it was ready I took it up to them. The oldest man wanted to know how much & I told him anything he was a mind to give and came back when they got ready to leave. They came down to my camp and left me 1 dozen sandwiches, ½ a prune pie, lean sardines[?] three ten cent cigars and while I was not looking the old gentlemen left 70 cents in a pie tin. So I was pretty well pleased. Mr. Barne went up on the summit four times which I thought was pretty good for a sick man after a three mile walk. Well, I got all the meals while he and his son were here.

The next morning being Saturday I got up about a quarter of five and so did Mr. Barne and we went up on the mountain to see the sunrise. It was fine. The fog in the valleys looked like a lot of lakes. When we got back I started the breakfast and Mr. Barne had a bleeding spell so I gave him some [illegible] and salt but he spit up blood more or less all the rest of the time.

So Sunday afternoon I went down with them to Mr. Payne's and that Monday morning Mr. Payne talked with me and said that Mr. Barne with his sickness would have to go and he was very sorry but it would stop others from coming there if they found out. He told them that they had better go up the lake about ½ mile and there was a good place to put up a tent and camp out and he would furnish them with what stuff they needed. But Mr. Barne made up his mind to go home so they got an early dinner and Mr. Payne's son took them in his motorboat to the station. I waited until a quarter of three and then came up to my camp. I

was one hour and five minutes but it was too much for my chest but I guess I will be all right in the morning. I cleaned up the best I could so as not to have anything that would cause any more sickness and went after water and then went up on the summit and took a look. I saw a smoke over on the south west

corner of Big Moose Lake and some campfires on the north side. I reported it to Daniel Lynn and he is phoning to McBride of Old Forge to find out and then will let me know Tuesday morning. I did not see anything of fire this morning. Well, I had felt a little lonely this afternoon. There was 9 or 10 up this afternoon from Mr. Platt's and young Mr. Platt brought up some mail for me also brought me 1 can turkey 1 dried beef 1 strawberry jam 1 cake of chocolate 1 box bullion capsules. So I had a great dinner tonight. I have not felt like doing much today but I have been going most of the time. I also got a Rochester paper from Mr. Lain so I guess I will write him tonight. The wind is blowing hard and I expect that it will rain before morning. It has got cloudy and also dark very early tonight. This is Wednesday. It rained all night and all day. I have felt lonely today and have caught cold and that is one thing that makes me feel so I got my meals regular. It thundered most all night. I think that I will go down to camp in the morning and stay a day or so. This is the first day of September. I haven't any news to write this time.

Thursday morning I went down to Mr. Payne's and got there at 11-30. In the afternoon I saw Mr. Platt and he asked me over to his house in the evening so I did and had a nice time also had some chocolate candy, stayed about 1 hour and then came home.

Friday morning I had Mr. Payne come up with me and help put up the fly to my tent and after dinner Dan Lynn came up for a while. We saw a fire on 95 degrees near Blue Mt. I will have to go up early and see if there are any signs of any in the morning. I also have got some reports to fill out.

Saturday I went up on the signal tower [*Many of the first wooden towers used as fire observation towers were old signal towers built for the 1899 USGS survey of which West Mt. was one*] but it was so smoky that I could not see very far so I came back and waited for Mr. Lynn to call me up and by his being so late I did not get through with my breakfast until nine o'clock. Then I went after water also I got up some wood and after dinner it began to rain so I have taken my bath and done out my washing and now I am starting to get my supper some body down at the station just called me up and wanted to know if it was going to rain. I told him that it might after a while. I may go down to Payne's in the morning.

Sunday morning it is raining hard so all I did was to get my meals and half past three it stopped for a short time so I started for camp. It began to rain again just as I got to the foot of the mountain. Well, when I got there I found a letter. Mr. Doherty and Monday morning Wm Payne came up with me to stay and help me and do such work that was necessary around camp. We got some more boughs and put a railing around our bed so as to keep the boughs to keep from getting scattered around the floor and he also made a camp stool out of some limbs and put a board on top. It has been a very pleasant day and there were 10 or 12 up here to see the view.

Tuesday morning Wm. went down to the station after some provisions and some more camp utensils. I have just been up and taken a look but could not discover any smoke. I have done up the work and got up some wood. It looks as like rain again today. Wm. did not come back until this Wednesday morning and brought up some provisions etc. We moved the telephone over nearer camp. It has been disconnected at the station since Monday. There were a number up here today. This is Thursday. There has been two fires, one on South Bay Raquette Lake and one on 255 degrees about 12 miles from here.

Friday Wm. went down to the station after some provisions and I have written some letters. Now I am trying to get my dinner. The fire does not burn very good. It is raining outside and if it keeps up I do not expect him back until tomorrow.

Saturday Wm. came back and brought me some mail also some receipts to sign and send back to the Commissioners so as to get some money. It seems a queer way of doing business.

Sunday just about dinner time Mr. Platt and Mr. Anderson and their cook came up also a number of others. It was a nice day. Wm. worked on some plans for a camp for Carnege [*Carnegie Camp North Point is on the northern shore of Raquette Lake in the Adirondack Park*] also on Monday there was not much news today. I called Dan Lynn up and asked him about signing those receipts and he said that he would meet me at Payne's Tuesday noon.

So Tuesday we both went down. Dan was there and had also brought my mail over and I was glad to get it so soon. Coming back up to camp we brought our

guns and I was pretty tired and did not feel very good for a long time. I have been gaining weight. Without my coat 198#.

Wednesday we made a cupboard to put our things in also another bench to put papers and things on. It makes it seem more like home. Thursday it was raining. When we got up this morning and today being the 16th of September we got our guns ready. This afternoon Wm went down to camp. I do not expect him back until tomorrow. I found a tree to get some birch bark off of to take home with me.

Friday Wm. came up and brought my mail and also 3 letters from the Commissioners. One was for me to sign a receipt for the field glasses and one asking for an invoice of what belonged to the State and one that contained my check for services from July 25 to Sept. 1st.

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Saturday Sept 18. Wm. Payne told me that he could not stay much longer and that his father was coming up to stay a while. So he started back home and towards night Mr. Payne came up. I was glad to see him or anybody. It has been very lonely here for the last few days. It is so clear and quiet. Sunday Mr. Payne got up just at daylight and went out to see if he could see a deer but did not find one. Our spring has just about given out so this afternoon we dug another lower down and we are in hopes that it will be better. Now we are getting our supper. I found a queer shape root & tree, a small one, and brought it to camp. I think that I can make a picture frame out of it. Monday morning we went after water and found about two wash tubs full so we felt pretty good. I started for the station about 9 o'clock and got down to the camp about 10 o'clock and cleaned up and changed my clothes and after dinner we started for the station in the launch and the engine did not work good so we were about three hours going. So when we got there I had to hustle. I got my hair cut and sent my money home. I got a few things and we started back. We got back to Mr. Payne's about six o'clock so I changed my clothes and started for the mountain. It was getting dark so I took a lantern and only got aobut ½ mile when I met Mr. Payne coming down, so we went back and stayed all night, and started back early Tuesday morning. We found everything all right

when we got here. On Wednesday it was cloudy all day and that evening it is thundering and it rained good all night.

Thursday Mr. Payne went down after supplies and came back in the afternoon with the horse and was pretty tired. Harold came up with him also got some mail a letter from Flossie [*Flossie Bronson (1886-1962), William Sanderson's first cousin*] & Ma [*William's mother Edna Jane Spencer Sanderson (1837-1921)*] & the children *[William's children Albert Legrand Sanderson (1900-1988) and Marjorie R. Sanderson (1898-1989)*]. Friday we took a walk over the other side of the mountain and got some gum [*Also referred to as spruce gum, it was a popular commodity and picking gum was an establish industry in the Adirondack Mountains in the 19th and early 20th centuries*]. Saturday we did not do much only fuss around camp. Mr. Payne got some more boughs for the bed and we slept pretty good last night. I went outdoor last night about 10-30 and pretty near run onto a deer. My how he did snort & blow.

This Sunday morning Mr. Payne has gone down home. I except that he will leave here Thursday and that I will have another man some time. The pay is so small that it is hard to find anybody to take the job. Monday it rained some early this morning and has been cloudy all day. Mr. Payne got back this afternoon. Not very much to write about. It started in to rain about eight o'clock this evening and it rained steady all night and until about 9 this Tuesday morning. About 12 the sun came out but I think it is going to rain some more. It cleared off and the sun came out bright and about three we took our guns and went out to take a look but did not see anything. This Wednesday it came off clear and bright but quite a haze so could not see off as far as common. Mr. Payne went down home and I do not know whether he will be back today or not. Mr. Payne did not come back tonight. I did my regular work and fussed around camp.

This is Thursday and it is still raining. Mr. Payne came back this afternoon and brought up some provisions. Dan Lynn called up and wanted to know about our having a horse to bring things up last week and also thought that the Commissioners would not stand for it. I was surprised that there should be a charge for it because Mr. Payne said that he was going to have the horse bring up a load so that he would not have to bring so much himself. Well, Mr. Payne was mad and would not stay over night and went right back so I am

alone once more. This is the last day of September so I only have one more month up here.

Oct 1st Friday – It has rained all day. I wrote some letters and started in to clean gum [*The imperfections in the spruce gum had to be removed before the gum could be chewed*]. Saturday I finished cleaning gum and have got about 2# so I guess I will stop. It is still raining and is very foggy. Tomorrow I am going down to camp and I do not expect to come back before Monday.

Sunday I went down to camp and got there about one o'clock and stayed all night.

Monday - Oct 4. Paul Steaves came over to stay with me and we came back to the station. Got here about 12-30 and about 3-30 we went for a walk but did not see any game. Tuesday we did not have much to do.

Wednesday Oct 6 - We see a smoke and I could not call anybody up on the phone so sent Paul down to see discovered smoke 9 -45 and left here 10-15. Thursday Paul came back. He found that some limbs had fallen on the wires, also that the smoke did not amount to anything. I was very disappointed about not getting any mail so I have been very blue. Friday the weather is nice but it is so still. It does not seem as thought I could stand it up here much longer.

Saturday it has been very pleasant. Sunday it has been a very nice day. The leaves are falling very fast and there has been quite a breeze and we may get some rain. Paul went down this afternoon, October 10th, and I expect him back tomorrow about noon.

William Wing Sanderson, 1909, one of the first
Forest Fire Observers in the Adirondacks for the
New York State Forest, Fish & Game Commission
West Mountain (Raquette Lake), Hamilton Co., New York, USA
Archival Preservation by Alexandra Stocker

William Wing Sanderson's 1909 photos from his
time as a Adirondack Forest Fire Observer
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